

Music and the Bible

Introduction

Music is a Language

- The famed poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, “Music is the universal language of mankind.”
- Linguists have identified five basic components of language, all of which are present in music:

Component	Language	Music
Phonology	<i>Phonemes</i> are the smallest units of sound (the <i>b</i> in <i>ball</i>)	<i>Notes</i> are the smallest units of sound
Morphology	Structure of individual words	Multiple <i>notes</i> make up <i>chords</i>
Syntax	Structure of multiple words in a sentence	Multiple <i>notes/chords</i> make up a <i>song</i>
Semantics	Additional meaning in words (e.g.: figurative or emotional)	Additional meaning, feeling, or association beyond musical tones.
Pragmatics	Altering language for desired goals or communication (e.g.: formal or informal)	The emotion or message conveyed by music to communicate to its audience.

- Just as a spoken language can be written down using alphabet symbols and punctuation marks, music can be written on paper with musical notation.
- When we add lyrics to music, we amplify the natural language of music by adding spoken language.

The Four Components of Music

- Melody – the series of notes/tones that make up the primary expression of music.
- Harmony – the additional tones that add depth to the melody.
- Rhythm – the pace and spacing of the tones in music.
- Lyrics – the words that we sing to the melody and harmony.

The Morality of Music

- One of the biggest debates on music is whether there is such thing as good or evil music.
- Just as with any other language, music is neither intrinsically moral or immoral in and of itself...

- ...but its use, intention, motivation, performance, message, etc. may be *very* moral or immoral.
- While music is essentially *amoral*, it is rarely or possibly never entirely *neutral*.
 - This is the same as any language: it can be used for good or evil.

The “Firsts” of Music

- The first mention of musical instruments is with Jubal, the great-great-great-great-grandson of Cain and the father of musicians – Genesis 4:21
- The first mention of playing music is when Laban would have sent Joseph away after a “farewell party” with joyous music – Genesis 31:27
- Perhaps the oldest mentions of music are by Job (Job 30:9) and Elihu (Job 35:10)
- The early mentions of the Jews singing are:
 - After their deliverance at the Red Sea – Exodus 15:1-21
 - When they attempted to worship God (see Exodus 32:5) through the image of the Golden calf – Exodus 32:18
 - At the well of Beer-elim – Numbers 21:17-18
 - The farewell song of Moses – Deuteronomy 32:1-43
 - The victory song of Deborah and Barak – Judges 5
 - The tragic celebration of Jephthah’s daughter – Judges 11:34
 - Saul’s encounter with prophets – I Samuel 10:5
 - The victory song about David – I Samuel 18:6-7
- The first mention of organizing the music used in worship is when David organized Levite singers when bringing the Ark to Jerusalem – I Chronicles 15:16
 - Note - There may not have been any organization the first time it moved – I Chronicles 13:8

Music and Theology

- Since God created all things (Genesis 1:1, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 11:3), music is an extension of His creation.
 - There even appears to have been a musical element in Creation – Job 38:7
- God can and will sing – Zephaniah 3:17
 - Christ sang with His disciples – Matthew 26:30
- There is singing in God’s presence in Heaven – Revelation 5:9, 14:2-3, 15:2-4
- God desires (and commands) us to sing to Him – Psalm 9:11, 18:49, 21:13, 57:9, 95:1, 149:1; Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:16
 - Yet He can and will reject our songs if they are insincere or corrupt – Amos 5:23